



About This Lesson

This lesson plan is based on the National Register of Historic Places registration file, "[Edison National Historic Site](#)" (with [photographs](#)), and the archives maintained at the site, and other materials about Thomas Edison and the West Orange laboratory. It was written by Benjamin Bolger, Park Ranger, Edison National Historic Site; and edited by Fay Metcalf, education consultant. TwHP is sponsored, in part, by the Cultural Resources Training Initiative and Parks as Classrooms programs of the National Park Service. This lesson is one in a series that brings the important stories of historic places into the classrooms across the country.

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Where it fits into the curriculum

The lesson could be used in teaching units on the industrialization of the United States, the development of science and technology, or social change in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Students will discover how Edison systematized the process of inventing, allowing for the rapid development and production of inventions that improved the lives of millions of people.

Time period: Gilded Age/Progressive Era

[Relevant United States History Standards for Grades 5-12](#)

[Relevant Curriculum Standards for Social Studies](#)

[Find your state's social studies and history standards for grades Pre-K-12](#)

Objectives for students

- 1) To describe how Edison created the first modern research and development laboratory complex and explain its functions.
- 2) To explain how Edison used his new complex to develop products and create industries that still affect our lives today.
- 3) To describe the process of invention from having experienced it through a simulation activity.
- 4) To investigate how technological and industrial developments have affected their own community.

Materials for students

The readings and maps listed below either can be used directly on the computer or can be printed out, photocopied and distributed to students. The photographs appear twice: in a low-resolution version with associated questions and alone in a high-resolution, full-page version.

- 1) [Three maps](#) of the area and the laboratory and factory complex;
- 2) [Two readings](#) about the work conducted in Edison's laboratory and his inventions;
- 3) [Eight photos](#) featuring Edison, his laboratories, and some of his inventions.

Visiting the Park

Edison National Historic Site is located on Main Street in West

Orange, New Jersey. The site is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's days. For additional information, [visit the park web pages](#).

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